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# Employment opportunities for women in professional accounting

Lillian V. Inke

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# PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTING



WOMEN'S BUREAU BULLETIN NO. 258

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

James P. Mitchell, Secretary

WOMEN'S BUREAU

Mrs. Alice K. Leopold, Director

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## DEDICATED

to serve young women, their counselors, and women young at any age, who are thinking about preparing for a career in professional accounting, or moving from another occupation into public accounting, tax and cost accounting, auditing, budget accounting, systems installation and related jobs which are essential in managing the business household . . .

and to the thousands of American employers who have never underestimated the good financial housekeeping of qualified women accountants.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

James P. Mitchell, Secretary

WOMEN'S BUREAU

Mrs. Alice K. Leopold, Director

# EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTING

Women's Bureau Bulletin No. 258

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

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Research Division of the Women's Bureau.

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**Of Keeping Books and Accounts:**

. . . Cannot bookkeeping claim an honorable and ancient lineage? Is it indeed an upstart as compared with geology and chemistry and landscape gardening and social psychology . . . and other cherished subjects of the university curriculum? Founded like San Francisco, by a follower of St. Francis of Assisi, cradled in mathematics, with algebra as a twin, established under the aegis of a great university—surely this is an origin sufficiently academic to give respectability to the subject.

—A. C. Littleton.

**Of Women:**

. . . I can look back to the days, not very long ago, when there were practically no women in what might be considered public accounting. Today there are a great many more than would have been believed possible 10 years ago. I have no idea how far women can go in accounting in public practice, but I am satisfied that they can go a great deal farther than they have gone, and the distance that they go depends more on themselves than on others.

—George D. Bailey, Past President,  
The American Institute of Accountants.



Figure 1.—Accountants Take Part in Public-Service Programs.

# **Employment Opportunities for Women in PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTING**

## **I. ACCOUNTING: A BUSINESS CAREER FOR WOMEN**

For the woman who looks toward a high-level business career, professional training in accounting can furnish a very good foundation. Today's accountant is expected to know a great deal about business practice and theory, the management of companies, commercial law, tax regulations, ways of determining operating costs and the means of measuring profit and loss, in addition to the basic principles of keeping books and records.

Training as an accountant can provide a woman with the opportunity to work at the management level with executives and leaders of business and industry. With this background, she may then be able to advance into an executive position or, if she chooses, go into business for herself. Or she may become an accounting specialist—a cost consultant, a tax adviser, a public auditor—or develop specific knowledge about financial transactions in a particular branch of commerce or industry. Accountancy is certainly not the only way for women to enter higher levels of business, but it is one of the very sound ways for those who have the proper qualifications and sufficient interest to acquire the necessary education.

Through professional training, accounting offers professional status. It opens the door for women to a world much wider than the one encompassed by ledgers and journals, as an increasing number of women have discovered in recent years.

### ***From Bookkeeping to Professional Accounting***

Ledgers and “ladies” were associated early. The business world of 1870 depended upon the services of nearly 1,000 women bookkeepers, accountants and cashiers, according to the census of that year. By 1910 there were about 190,000 women in this broad occupational group, although very few among them were professional accountants.

How many men or women accountants there have been at any time since the first census up to the 1950 census can only be estimated roughly, because of gaps in information. Nevertheless, the information which is at hand points clearly to the fact that most bookkeepers have been women and most accountants, men. In 1950, women were 77 percent of all employed bookkeepers, although they had begun to make measurable progress in accounting and auditing jobs.

In the 10-year period from 1940 to 1950, women accountants and auditors increased in number from a little over 18,000 to more than 55,000. Roughly, this was a more than 200-percent increase of women in a group of occupations in which men have been predominant. It compares very favorably with women's progress in other professionally classified occupations in the same period.

Although the census report can be adjusted somewhat for closer estimates of qualified accountants than the 1950 decennial count shows,<sup>1</sup> a comparison of women accountants with women in other professional groups indicates the general trend. In table 1, six occupations are compared with accountants to show the increase among women, from 1940 to 1950.

Table 1.—Increases in number of women in selected occupations, 1940–1950

Occupation	Number of women		Women added since 1940
	1940	1950	
ACCOUNTANTS AND AUDITORS.....	18, 265	55, 660	37, 395
Chemists.....	1, 654	7, 451	5, 797
Engineers, technical.....	730	6, 475	5, 745
Lawyers and judges.....	4, 187	6, 256	2, 069
Physicians and surgeons.....	7, 608	11, 714	4, 106
Social, group and welfare workers.....	44, 389	58, 917	14, 528
Teachers (not elsewhere classified).....	767, 769	834, 996	67, 227

Source: U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. See also Women's Bureau Bull. 253, Changes in Women's Occupations, 1940–1950.

It may be noted from the comparisons that the numerical increase of women accountants was exceeded only by an increase of teachers among the occupations listed. Teaching, like social work, is a traditional field for women; the others are occupations in which men predominate.

### Women CPA's Are Increasing

The highest level of professional skill that may be achieved in accountancy is rewarded by a certificate which designates the holder as a CPA (Certified Public Accountant). To earn it, candidates must meet various qualifications including the successful completion of a difficult written examination.

All of the women who took the trouble to study for and pass the State certifying examinations for public accountants, up to very recent times, may be regarded as pioneers. As a matter of fact, State examinations for the licensing of public accountants were not re-

<sup>1</sup> See chapter III for discussion of this point.

quired anywhere in the country until 1896, when the State of New York adopted the first law on certification. From the turn of the century until 1933, only a few more than 100 accounting certificates were issued to women by all States conducting examinations.

Up to 1940, only 175 women had been licensed as CPA's, but in recent years the number has increased more rapidly. By 1946 the cumulative total for women was 360, and by 1954, it had reached approximately 900. The total number of living CPA's, men and women, was reported as about 52,000 in 1954.

### ***Traditions and Trends***

Although traditional patterns for women's employment change very slowly over the years, attitudes toward women's abilities and potentialities in the business world have improved steadily with the demonstrated proficiency of women in high-level employment. World War II, which was said by some to have taken as many as a third of men accountants into military service while it required, simultaneously, great increases in production and business activity, provided unprecedented opportunities for women with accountancy preparation. Many of the qualified women who replaced men in this period acquired permanent positions and helped to create a more favorable climate for the acceptance of women.

Fortunately, because of the great need of commerce and industry for increasing numbers of skilled and trained personnel, the time is at hand when most, if not all, employers are finding it to their advantage to break with tradition in the employment of women. They are more likely today, and in the years to come, to consider women applicants for accounting positions on an individual, professional basis, and not apply, against their own interests, either the generalizations which can be reasonably made of women as a group or conclusions based upon a single, unsatisfactory employee.

### ***One Man's Opinion***

In his Autobiography, Benjamin Franklin paid tribute to both the homemaking ability and the business shrewdness of a woman who excelled in accounting. He tells the following story:

In 1733, I sent one of my Journeymen to Charleston South Carolina where a Printer was wanting. I furnish'd him with a Press and Letters, on an Agreement of Partnership, by which I was to receive One Third of the Profits, of the Business, paying One Third of the Expence. He was a Man of Learning and honest, but ignorant in Matters of Account; and tho' he sometimes made me Remittances, I could get no Account from him, nor any satisfactory State of our Partnership while he lived. On his Decease, the Business was continued by his Widow, who being born & bred in Hol-

land, where as I have been inform'd the Knowledge of Accompts makes a Part of Female Education, she not only sent me as clear a State as she could find of the Transactions past, but continu'd to account with the greatest Regularity & Exactitude every Quarter afterwards; and manag'd the Business with such Success that she not only brought up reputably a Family of Children, but at the Expiration of the Term was able to purchase of me the Printing House and establish her Son in it.

At a time when few studies except fine arts and household skills were regarded as suitable for women, Benjamin Franklin proposed a curriculum change. After telling his story about the woman educated in "Accompts" (accounting), he observed:

I mention this Affair chiefly for the Sake of recommending that Branch of Education for our young Females, as likely to be of more Use to them & their children in Case of Widowhood than either Music or Dancing. . . .

## II. DEFINITIONS AND DIRECTIONS

### ***What Is Professional Accounting?***

The job titles of "bookkeeper" and "accountant" have been used interchangeably over the years. A distinction between the two occupations began to develop toward the close of the nineteenth century with the very rapid growth of business following the industrial revolution. Not until the decennial census of 1950, however, were bookkeepers, as predominantly clerical workers, separated from accountants and auditors, who were ranked as professional.

Because accounting is relatively new among the professionally recognized occupations, and also because it has been so closely associated with bookkeeping, the differences between the two are sometimes still blurred in usage.

Nearly every occupation has problems of language and definition, and accounting is no exception. Job titles in practice are not definitive in themselves. Each employer has the privilege of giving the jobs in his firm the titles that seem suitable to him. Most employers do not go very far beyond established custom in adopting the same titles for the same kinds of jobs. For example, they would hardly be likely to call a posting clerk—who posts routine entries on a ledger—an accountant. They might, however, call a posting clerk an accounting clerk; or the clerk who works in an accounting department might call herself an accountant.

There are also job situations in which it is difficult to distinguish between bookkeeping and accountancy. Borderline cases exist, especially when a business is in a state of reorganization or expansion; or because, in a large organization where a great volume of bookkeeping records is processed, a professionally trained accountant may tempo-

rarily do relatively routine work. Besides, it often happens that a head bookkeeper in a small business performs a greater variety of duties and is given a greater degree of responsibility than a professionally qualified junior accountant in a large firm, although the junior professional has just begun the training period on the job and will eventually advance.

Due to the scope of work, the intangible nature of many business concepts, and the multiplicity of skills and knowledge involved in the field of modern accounting, it is not easy to convey the full meaning of accounting with a terse and explicit definition. It is probably more advantageous for a student to examine some definitions of the field of work, and then review definitions of the most commonly known jobs within the field.

### **Definitions of the Field of Work**

The field of accounting is generally divided into three broad areas of work: public, private, and governmental. The Bureau of Labor Statistics described these three fields in its bulletin, *Employment Outlook in Accounting* (published 1951), as follows:

. . . . Public accountants offer their services to the general public on a fee basis, in much the same way as do lawyers, doctors, and dentists. A public accountant may be in business for himself, or he may be a partner in an accounting firm. In addition, the larger firms have professional accountants on their staffs, who work for a salary but are also considered public accountants. Traditionally, public accountants offer their services to the public as experts in all types of accounting. However, the two largest areas of public accounting work consist of auditing and tax services. Public accountants serve a wide variety of clients—business enterprises, government agencies, and nonprofit institutions.

Private accountants handle the financial records of a single business enterprise or nonprofit organization and work on a salary basis. They are frequently referred to as executive or administrative accountants. When they work for manufacturing or other concerns, they are often called industrial accountants. In addition, accountants are employed by all branches of Federal, State, and local governments, including government-owned corporations. Accountants in private and government work customarily specialize in the performance of a single type of accounting service; they may do any of the types of accounting service described previously. They also tend to become specialists in a fairly narrow field of employment such as a particular branch of manufacturing, public utilities, or transportation.

### **Occupational Definitions**

The student is referred to the Department of Labor's Dictionary of Occupational Titles and to accountant job definitions excerpted from the Dictionary which appear in appendix 1. For comparison, several bookkeeping and accounting clerk jobs are included.

Seven most commonly found accounting jobs are included in the Dictionary. They may be grouped as: (1) GENERAL ACCOUNTANT and AUDITOR; (2) BUDGET ACCOUNTANT, COST ACCOUNTANT, TAX ACCOUNTANT and ACCOUNTING SYSTEM EXPERT; and (3) PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT. Generally considered, the jobs in the first group are broad and cover a wide range of operations; the second group consists of specialists; and both first and second groups are usually found in private or governmental employment on a salary basis.

The public accountant is the broadest of the definitions and may include most of the knowledge and skill of the other six classifications. Many public accountants study for the examination which *certifies* them according to standards established in each State. If certified, the public accountant is usually called by the abbreviated title, CPA (Certified Public Accountant). However, a number of successfully employed accountants in public work are not certified. Some public accountants who are not certified may be licensed as required by the States in which they practice.

### **Specialization According to the Type of Business Served**

In addition to specialization according to the type of job duties—such as tax, budget, or cost accounting—there is an increasing trend toward specialization according to the type of business served.

The nature of business itself may lead an accountant toward career specialization in one business, sometimes determined by chance or the circumstances of employment. If a junior accountant does well at a beginning job with an electric power utilities company, for example, and is advanced to higher positions as a result of his efforts and the firm's need, he is likely to stay and become an accounting expert in the electric power utilities business.

It is also possible for an accountant to specialize in one phase of the work for a specific business. For example, he may become a cost expert in the garment manufacturing industry, or a systems installation expert in banking.

### **Research and Teaching**

One of the applications of accounting is in the teaching field. Research and jobs in technical writing may also use an accountant's services full time, but most accountants have opportunities for research as a regular part of their jobs and are frequently called upon to present their findings in technical reports at professional society meetings or in the journals published by professional groups.



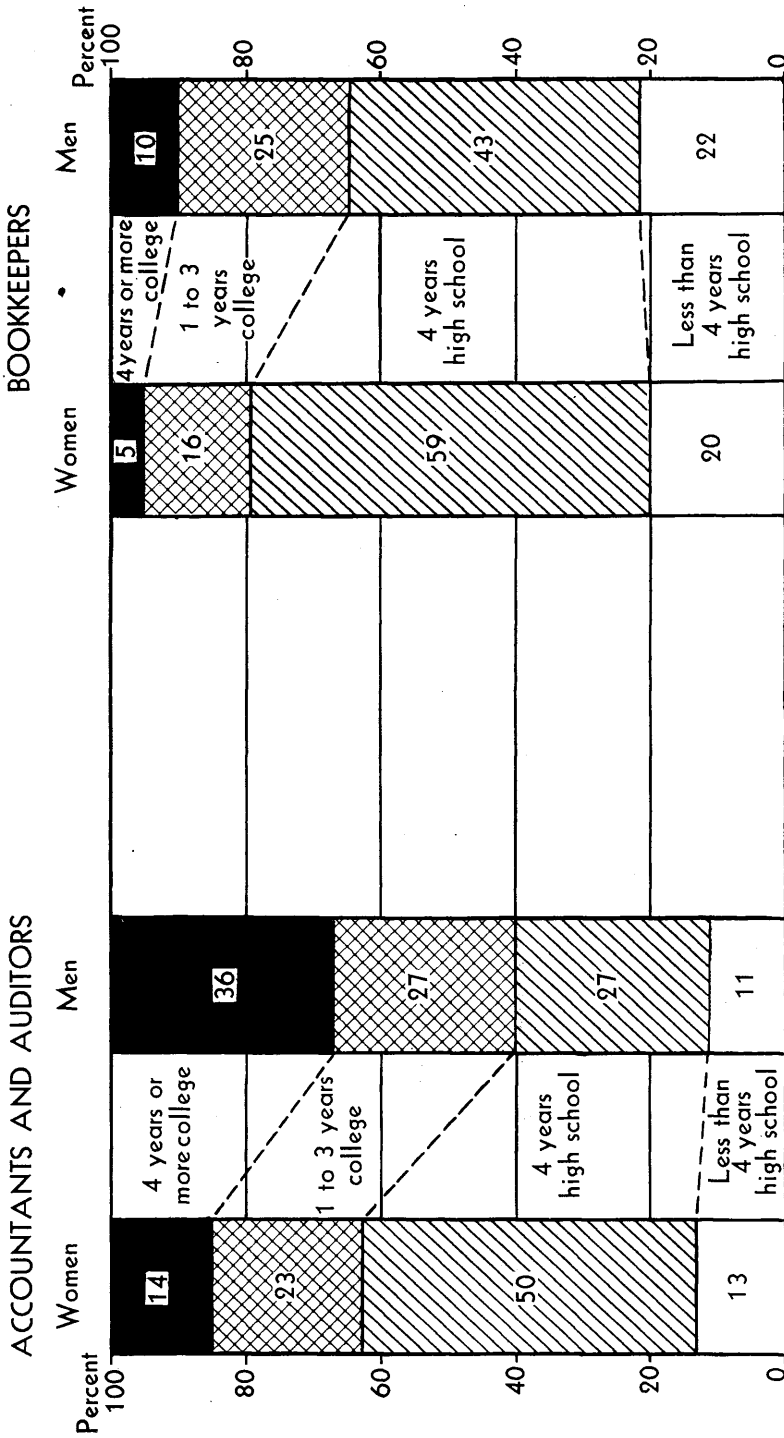


Figure 2.—Years of Schooling Completed by Men and Women Accountants and Bookkeepers: 1950.

### **Law and Accounting**

Because modern accountancy depends so much upon understanding laws and regulations which affect the conduct of business, it is not uncommon for an accountant to study law and combine the two professions. Some women accountants have not only become proficient in both but are outstanding business advisers, as a result.

### **Professional Ethics**

To be recognized as professional, the accountant must not only undertake a formal course of training which develops his judgment and adds to his technical knowledge, but must practice in accordance with the ethical standards which have been established by the professional societies, by business law, and through social and moral codes. In very simple terms, it means that he must know how to keep the confidences of his associates, be able to recognize and resist corrupt practices, and be prepared to cooperate with governmental and judicial agencies which administer the law.

### **A Note to Women About Professional Training**

Men and women entering the accounting profession today are advised to prepare with 4 years of college. It is doubtful whether any young person starting out on an accounting career with less than a 2-year college-level accounting course could receive favorable consideration from an employer. Questions of education and training are discussed more fully in chapter IV, but these guide lines will serve as a basis for comparing the educational backgrounds of men and women accountants and bookkeepers, and as a note to women preparing to enter an occupation in which they seek equal advancement with men.

Figure 2 (p. 7) and table 2 (p. 9) represent the educational attainments of men and women in 1950 in the two broad groups of (1) accountants and auditors and (2) bookkeepers.

It can be seen from the figure above that men accountants, as a group, showed generally higher educational achievement than women. Thirty-six percent of the men and only 14 percent of the women had completed 4 years or more of college. In the group of accountants who had 1 to 3 years of college, men and women were much closer: 27 percent and 23 percent, respectively. But among all classified accountants and auditors, 63 percent of the men, and only 37 percent of the women, had more than a high-school education.

A review of the educational backgrounds of bookkeepers counted in the 1950 census indicates that the years of schooling, especially below the college level, for men and women bookkeepers were more

Table 2.—Estimate of number of employed men and women classified as accountants and auditors, and as bookkeepers by selected education groups: 1950

Education	Accountants and auditors				Bookkeepers			
	Women		Men		Women		Men	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total number reported as employed <sup>1</sup> -----	55, 660	100	320, 799	<sup>2</sup> 100	556, 229	100	164, 748	100
Less than 4 years of high school-----	7, 429	13	35, 888	11	108, 853	20	36, 327	22
4 years of high school-----	27, 668	50	85, 613	27	330, 456	59	70, 001	43
1 to 3 years of college-----	12, 947	23	85, 437	27	90, 332	16	41, 517	25
4 years or more of college-----	7, 616	14	113, 861	36	26, 588	5	16, 903	10

<sup>1</sup> Total numbers reported are based on the full census count; all other numbers are based on a 20-percent sample.  
<sup>2</sup> Percents do not add to total due to rounding.

Source: U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. 1950 Census of Population. (Estimated from unpublished data.)

nearly equal than for the men and women accountants. However, it may be noted that the men bookkeepers held a slight lead over the women in college attainment: 35 percent of the men had acquired 1 or more years of college in contrast to 21 percent of the women, and 10 percent of the men and 5 percent of the women had 4 years or more of college.

The differences noted between men and women when grouped by the amount of schooling are not surprising. Both as bookkeepers in the minority, and as accountants in the majority, men have been encouraged to advance by tradition and economic responsibility. Furthermore, the disparities in educational attainment between men and women do not measure differences in group capacity nor individual aptitude. They have been included mainly as a matter of historical interest. The next generation of women accountants may be able, looking back at 1950, to see a remarkable professional advance qualitatively, as well as in numbers.

### **III. WOMEN ACCOUNTANTS AT WORK**

#### ***How Many Women in Professional Jobs?***

An estimate of the number of women accountants who might be classified as professional in the 1950's can be only a rough guess. It is known that the number of women who reported themselves, or who were reported by their households, as accountants and auditors in the 1950 census was 55,660. This represented 15 percent of all accountants.

Several problems confront the estimator. It is not possible to make a clear-cut distinction between "professional" and "subprofessional" accountants because accounting job requirements have not been standardized except for the CPA, and even CPA requirements vary somewhat between States. Another obstacle is the scarcity of information about employed accountants.

Nevertheless, one way to arrive at a good guess of the number of women professional accountants is to make some adjustments in the 1950 census report on the basis of the information available and by applying some standards for the professional accountant.

Table 3 shows selected education-and-age groups for men and women classified as accountants and auditors in 1950.

Considering the trend among employers toward requiring college graduation, a CPA license or several years of college plus diversified and high-level work experience for accountant positions, the professional status of persons in groups 3, 4, and 5, may be regarded as open to considerable question. Almost certainly, those persons in group 5 who were under 20 years old and did not finish high school were not

**Table 3.—Estimate of number of employed women and men classified as accountants and auditors, by selected age and education groups: 1950**

Age and education	Women		Men	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total number reported as employed <sup>1</sup> .....	55, 660	100	320, 799	100
Group 1: Number 20 years of age and over with 4 or more years of college.....	7, 601	14	113, 804	36
Group 2: Number 25 years of age and over with 1 to 3 years of college.....	11, 216	20	77, 397	24
Group 3: Number 20 to 24 years of age with 1 to 3 years of college.....	1, 555	3	7, 703	2
Group 4: Number 20 years of age and over with 4 years of high school.....	25, 811	46	84, 860	26
Group 5: Number 14 to 19 years of age (3,607) or with less than 4 years of high school (42,905).....	9, 477	17	37, 035	12

<sup>1</sup> Total numbers reported (55,660 women, 320,799 men) are based on the full census count; all other numbers are based on a 20-percent sample.

Source: U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. 1950 Census of Population. (Unpublished data.)

professional accountants. Some of the men and women in group 4 may have been closer to the professional requirements than some in 3 and 5. Among the men, especially, there may have been some past middle age who had acquired some basic academic training and a diversified work experience at professionally higher levels. But no information is available on the age distribution of the group members nor on their employment history. On the whole, it seems probable that, of the five groups, those in the first two are more likely to meet professional standards than the others.

If groups 3, 4, and 5 are omitted, the number of women accountants and auditors is reduced about 66 percent to a rough estimate of 19,000 who, if not all fully qualified to meet professional standards today, might be considered as including both professional accountants and high-level bookkeepers. By omitting the comparable groups of men, their number would be reduced 40 percent to a total of 191,000. These adjusted estimates would place women accountants at 10 percent of the total, rather than 15 percent.

It should be kept in mind that these estimates are speculative and depend on the arbitrary application of trends in educational preparation and hiring applied to large groups of loosely classified persons. There can be little doubt about the men and women in group 5: because of their youthful character and limited education a majority of

them were more likely to have been accounting clerks rather than full-fledged bookkeepers; certainly they were not professional accountants.

On the other hand, there may have been a few persons in groups 3 and 4 who deserve consideration as professional accountants. Some of those in group 4 may have worked into professional jobs through 15 or 20 years of experience and self-education; and some in group 3 may have passed the CPA examination with 2 or 3 years of college and home study. There could not have been very many, however.

Work patterns of women accountants, in particular, indicate their continuing efforts, even during employment, to obtain a full 4 years of college-level training, if they plan to stay in the field. Experienced women are generally well aware of their need to obtain as much education as possible in order to equalize competition for jobs with men.

To get at the "hard core" estimate of professionally qualified women accountants, the estimator might apply current requirements more closely by eliminating all persons classified as accountants except those in group 1 and adding possibly 2,000 more who may have reached professional levels since 1950. This would bring the estimate to something under 10,000 women. (Because of the differences between men and women in work patterns, probably the same standards should not be applied to men.)

In summary, there appears to be a choice between accepting a top estimate of 19,000 and a low estimate of 10,000 or less for qualified women professional accountants. Not until accounting job requirements are standardized will it be possible to arrive at the "hard core" count.

### **Two Professional Women's Societies**

So far as can be determined, women are admitted to full membership in all of the professional accounting organizations. (See appendix 2 for selected list.) There are two organizations, formed in the 1930's, which consist exclusively of women.

In order to advance the professional interests of women certified public accountants, the American Woman's Society of Certified Public Accountants was formed in 1933. Membership is limited to women certified public accountants throughout the United States and its Territories. As of June 1954 the society had 307 members.

In 1938, the AWS CPA organized an affiliate, the American Society of Women Accountants which offers "membership for those women who are actively engaged in any phase of accounting, who are instructors of students of accounting, or who otherwise have a substantial interest in accounting."

The two societies issue jointly *The Woman C. P. A.*, a bimonthly publication.

Women CPA's may belong to both societies but must become members of AWSCPA before joining ASWA.

### **Survey of Women Accountants in 1954**

In order to learn more about the personal characteristics and employment of women accountants, a survey was made by the Women's Bureau in 1954 in cooperation with the American Woman's Society of Certified Public Accountants and the American Society of Women Accountants.

About 2,500 questionnaires were sent out to the members of AWSCPA and ASWA. Replies were received from slightly more than 1,000 members, of whom one out of five was a certified public accountant.

Results of the survey follow.

#### **Age**

The median age of all accountants in the survey was 44 years. CPA's as a group were 6 years younger than the noncertified accountants in the survey, or 39 years compared with 45 years.

#### **Marital status and children**

A little over half of all the women accountants were single; 28 percent were married; 20 percent were widowed, divorced, or separated. Among the CPA's, 60 percent were single and about 30 percent were married; the other 10 percent were widowed, divorced, or separated.

Of all the women who were, or who had been, married, only one-fifth had children under 18 years of age; and one out of three of these mothers had children under 6.

#### **Education**

About three-fourths of the entire group reporting in the survey had attended college, and close to one-third were college graduates. Ninety-five percent of the CPA's and 68 percent of the noncertified accountants had attended college. Graduate work was reported for 10 percent of the entire group and for 25 percent of the CPA's. At the other end of the educational scale, 6.7 percent of all the accountants surveyed reported less than 4 years of high school.

#### **Certification**

A majority of CPA's had acquired their certificates since 1946. About 30 percent of them were certified between 1946 and 1949, and some 40 percent were certified in 1950 or later. Illinois, New York, California, Texas, Ohio, Maryland, Washington, New Jersey, and Michigan accounted for over two-thirds of the women CPA's.

### Type of employment

About 14 percent of the women covered by the survey were self-employed, most of them as accountants and auditors.

The great majority (86 percent) of the CPA's were employed as accountants, auditors, or controllers, whereas only slightly more than half of the non-CPA's were employed in such jobs. More than one-fourth of the non-CPA's were employed as bookkeepers or head bookkeepers, but only 3 percent of the CPA's were so employed.

Three major industry groups accounted for two-thirds of the employment of women accountants in the survey: (1) public accounting, in which 25 percent of the women were employed; (2) manufacturing, and (3) wholesale and retail trade, each with about 20 percent of the women accountants in the survey.

In the public accounting field, 7 out of 10 of the women identified themselves as "accountants," while in other industries a variety of titles, including "bookkeeper," were used.

### Salaries

The median salary of noncertified accountants included in the survey was \$4,526; of CPA accountants, \$6,185.

Among CPA accountants the lowest median salary (\$5,500) was found in the field of finance, insurance, and real estate, but this field accounted for less than 5 percent of all CPA's in the survey. The lowest salaried group among CPA's earned about \$500 more per year than the highest salaried group among noncertified accountants. In the latter group, women employed in manufacturing had the highest median salaries, and those in wholesale and retail trade, the lowest.

The CPA's who were employed in relatively large firms (with 500 or more employees) had the highest median salaries (\$6,750 per year). Among non-CPA's, however, median salaries were highest in smaller firms employing between 100 and 200 persons.

### Summing up—

Based on the survey findings of this sample of 1,000 from the two women's professional accounting societies, the "typical" member was apt to be: over 40, unmarried, and earning almost \$5,000 a year as an auditor, controller, or accountant. She was most likely to be working in manufacturing, merchandising, or for a public accounting firm, and she had probably attended college.

When the certified public accountants were singled out, it was noted that the "typical" CPA member was just on the edge of 40 and more likely than her noncertified colleague to be single. She had almost certainly gone to college, and more of her number had graduated from college or had taken graduate work than those who were not certified.



Finally, the CPA woman member was likely to be earning about \$1,500 more a year than her noncertified associates.

Whether the CPA's were better satisfied with their jobs than the noncertified members was not determined. In terms of financial rewards, however, their education was "paying off."

#### **IV. WHAT IT TAKES TO BECOME AN ACCOUNTANT**

##### **First Steps**

A practical first step for the young woman who is interested in an accounting career is to find out all she can about the job and do some reckoning in her own personal ledger. This report has attempted to set forth some of the particular questions raised about accounting as a career for women, but there is much more to read about the job and what it is like. (See reference list, appendix 3).

Counselors, teachers and parents may help to answer some of the questions about personal traits that are usually considered important for accounting work. They include: feeling "at home" with arithmetic, and average or better scores in school for arithmetic subjects; an interest in problem-solving of all kinds (possibly shown in a liking for puzzles); a willingness to take responsibility and make decisions, a well-developed ethical sense; neat habits of work and a sense of satisfaction in bringing order and organization to a mass of detail; an ability to work under pressure without getting unduly nervous (such as taking examinations "in stride" or enjoying competitive sports); dependability and perseverance.

The young girl who elects to enter the field of professional accounting will, of course, carefully examine both sides of the ledger.

The assets that she will derive consist of her identification with a highly regarded profession; the opportunity to gain varied experience in serving a number of clients; a chance to travel in some jobs; a possibility that through her efforts and value to a firm she may work into an executive position. If she becomes a certified public accountant, or opens her own business, she will have a considerable amount of independence. She will know the satisfactions that come of doing work that is not routine; of being consulted on questions that are challenging; of solving complex financial matters. She will be recognized as a responsible citizen in the community, for she will often do work that has an impact on the public welfare and interest. She will have reasonable security and adequate compensation.

There are liabilities: the work is not easy. It requires long periods of hard, sometimes tedious, work involving constant devotion and alertness to problems; and there is a need for continuing study and re-



**Figure 3.—Work Surroundings Vary for Accountants.**

Usually, accountants work in quiet, comfortable offices of their own. Sometimes, however, particularly when assigned to inventory or cost records, the accountant may work in a busy and crowded section of the warehouse or in the materials-control department of a large factory.

search. The hours will often be uncertain. There is likely to be overtime work during peak seasons. Occasional travel may interfere with personal plans. It will never be the kind of job that becomes easier at higher levels of professional achievement.

As a guide to the uncertain, there are aptitude tests for the inexperienced and achievement tests for students or employees at varying levels of experience in accounting work. Tests in themselves do not provide the absolute "yes" or "no" to a career choice, but they have been found very helpful to persons who might be in doubt about their qualifications.

### ***Aptitude and Achievement Tests***

The American Institute of Accountants has developed tests that may be administered at the high-school, college, and professional levels. These have been used by many educational institutions and accounting employers to appraise students, job applicants, and on-the-job employees for aptitudes in accounting study and work, knowledge of accounting procedures and principles, and vocational interests. From 1946, when the college testing program was started, until 1954, over 235,000 tests had been given in about 400 universities and colleges.

The high-school testing program, however, was not started until the fall of 1953. The tests can be given to seniors or juniors and do not require that the students who take them have a knowledge of bookkeeping or accounting. Three tests are included in the program. The Orientation Test consists of three parts—business and general vocabulary, arithmetic problems in the field of business, and accounting problems. It is used as a measurement of students' general aptitude to solve business problems. Others, known as the Kuder Preference Record-Vocational Tests, are used to measure broad fields of interest and personal inclinations in various occupational situations.

At any point during collegiate education, the Strong Vocational Interest Blank may be used. This test shows whether the student has the same pattern of interests that successful CPA's have. In addition, two achievement tests are used for students who have already completed some accounting work in college. A Level I Achievement Test is given after 1 year of accounting study. The score received on this test may help the student decide whether he has enough proficiency in the subject to continue concentrating on accounting in his college work. The Level II Achievement Test, given toward the end of the senior year, indicates the knowledge of accounting that has been acquired.

The Orientation Test given in colleges is more advanced than that given in the high-school program, but aims, similarly, to disclose the aptitude a student has to solve problems in business situations.

Scores made on the Orientation Test are only moderately affected by the student's experience in accounting work.

Many accounting employers who wish some assurance that young people applying for jobs will make good workers, or who want to know how much proficiency their staff members have acquired in order to determine if they should be promoted, use tests developed by the American Institute of Accountants for this purpose. If employers have the facilities, they may administer the tests in their own offices. Others may arrange to use testing centers established by the institute in a number of locations throughout the country. AIA testing centers have certified examiners and the supplies necessary for the administration of the tests.

Either the school or the employer pays for the services of administering and scoring aptitude or achievement tests. Individuals and groups pay a nominal fee if they take the tests at institute centers or by special arrangement through a school.

In some cities, the student, through a school counselor, may have access to a State Employment Service where arrangements can be made for a series of tests known as the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB). These are given free, as a public service, and some high schools have provided for their senior students who are undecided about careers to take the GATB in groups.

The GATB is not designed to test specifically for accounting, but to give some report of a student's range of vocational aptitudes, including accounting.

### ***What Kind of Education?***

For an accounting career, the American Institute of Accountants recommends a full 4-year college course, leading to a bachelor's degree with a major in accounting. A considerable number of successfully employed accountants who were interviewed by the Women's Bureau in 1955 supported this view.

Relatively few women are entering the accounting field through the 4-year college course. In the school year of 1953-54, only 440 women in the United States received the bachelor's degree with an accounting major, in contrast to 7,021 men. Although the number of women had increased by well over 100 compared with the previous year, there is room for many more.

For women who cannot attend college for the full 4 years, other educational plans are possible. There are private business and accountancy schools approved by agencies such as the National Association and Council of Business Schools, or which are members of the American Association of Professional Schools of Accountancy. A number of these schools provide concentrated technical training in

accountancy, related business subjects, and English, in a 1-year day course (2 years at night) or a 2-year day course (3 years at night). Some of them award a bachelor's degree in commercial science for the 2-year day course. Some also give, in addition, a master's degree for another full year of work.

Students often obtain excellent accelerated training in accountancy subjects in college-level courses at business and accountancy schools. However, unless they supplement their studies with cultural subjects, or have 2 years of liberal arts courses before going to business school, their education will be limited to training in technical proficiency.

Very few junior colleges appear to provide a full accounting course, although many of them offer accounting subjects in both day and evening school. (Inquiries may be made at local junior or community colleges.)

Some universities and colleges with accounting courses add to the employability of their students by providing them with opportunities to gain actual work experience while studying. In cooperation with employers, they conduct internship programs for students who are willing to spend some time away from the classroom in order to work at accounting. For the most part, however, the beginning accountant gains his actual on-the-job training when he enters employment. In a small firm, this training may be relatively informal, but in a number of large firms the beginning accountant will participate in a systematic company training program.

Although many accountants who have not had college training have been successful, a college degree is without doubt an asset to those who wish to advance in the profession. In 1955 two States, New York and New Jersey, required a bachelor's degree for the CPA examination. An increasing number of employers will not even consider applicants who have not had a college education; they want their accountants to be well-read, acquainted with civic and social problems, capable of expressing themselves clearly in speech and writing, and with trained judgment and analytical ability. Accounting requires imagination, the ability to think in terms of abstract concepts, and facility of expression, in addition to technical skill. Such qualities are best developed through college training.

### **Preparing for College**

As a rule, colleges expect students applying for admission to have completed a high-school course including 15 or 16 units in specified subjects. These may include 4 or 5 units of electives, sometimes taken

from designated courses. Although there are variations in college entrance requirements, in general, a combination of courses similar to those in the following list is acceptable for students planning a major in accounting.<sup>2</sup>

	<i>Units</i>
English .....	3 or 4
Mathematics.....	2
Foreign Language.....	2
American History.....	1
Social Science.....	1
Science .....	1
Electives .....	4 or 5
Total.....	15 or 16

### **College Requirements for Graduation With a Major in Accounting**

A high-school diploma or, in exceptional cases, the equivalent of a diploma, is the basis for entrance to all colleges. In addition, certain colleges require applicants to pass general entrance examinations, and others expect applicants to take scholastic aptitude and achievement tests. Some colleges permit applicants who lack certain of the required high-school courses to take make-up examinations.

Following their enrollment, students take the courses, usually given by the schools of commerce and business administration of the colleges, that lead to a degree of bachelor of science or bachelor of business administration, with a major in accounting. In some colleges the degree awarded may be that of a bachelor of arts, with a major in accounting.

Institutions differ, too, as to the number of units that must be satisfactorily completed to earn the degree. It would appear, however, that 128 semester hours of credit are most often required for graduation.

For the most part, professional courses offered by colleges make available to the students a general background of information on public, private, and governmental accounting, which enables them to take beginners' jobs in any type of accounting work. Some colleges, however, clearly divide their curriculum into specializations, and students attending the institution are trained for either certified public accounting; commercial or industrial accounting; or cost accounting.

The American Accounting Association (which has a membership of nearly 5,000, of whom almost half are teachers and professors of accounting and the others are in public and private practice) pub-

<sup>2</sup> This list represents an estimate, based on a review of the catalogs of seven colleges that graduated the largest numbers of accounting majors in 1953-54.

lished a study of collegiate accountancy education in January 1954. The report recommended that approximately 50 percent of the college student's time should be devoted to the study of liberal and cultural subjects; approximately 25 percent to general business subjects, including some related to accounting; and approximately 25 percent to accounting subjects. In the opinion of the committee that formulated the report, the disparities existing in the programs of the several hundred institutions providing collegiate accounting instruction should be reduced; and students should be educated in wide areas of interests as well as in professional accounting in order to develop leadership in civic affairs and understanding of social and economic activities.

### **Choosing a College**

When selecting a college, the student may wish to consider several important factors. Is the college located in the State in which she intends to work? Laws and regulations affecting the accounting profession vary among States. A student might, therefore, wish to attend a college in the State where she will be taught the legal aspects she will need to apply to her work. Does the school offer a concentration of courses in a specialization in which she is most interested? Quite often a decision to specialize in one phase of accounting may not crystallize until a background of knowledge and experience has been acquired, but if a girl believes she would prefer to train for a definite specialization, she might make certain that the college she chooses can provide that particular training. Does the college offer an internship program? Not all schools have this type of program, which enables a student to acquire practical work experience in conjunction with her studies. If a girl intends to participate in an internship program, she might inquire whether there is one at the college she will attend.

Acceptable collegiate schools of accountancy may be accredited generally by their respective regional academic associations or may be members of the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business.

In all her preparations for entering college, a student can call upon her high-school counselor for assistance. Some of her questions might be readily answered by the counselor; others might require contacts with colleges to secure the desired information.

### **Advanced Degrees in Accounting**

A number of universities offer a master's degree in accounting. In 1954, this degree was awarded to 538 students, including 20 women.

Very few accountants, however, continue with education beyond the master's degree. In 1954, only four universities—the University of Alabama, the University of Illinois, the Ohio State University, and the University of Texas—awarded the doctor's degree to 12 men and 1 woman.

Apparently, those who earn the bachelor's degree are not, for the most part, interested in continuing their academic studies, believing, perhaps, that time spent in the actual practice of the profession would be of greater career advantage than time spent in the study of advanced theory and the preparation of a thesis.

### **Private Business and Accountancy Schools**

The 1-year day course in a private business school<sup>3</sup> enables the student to take a position as bookkeeper, accounting clerk, bookkeeping-machine operator, or accounting-machine operator.

The 2-year course in a private business or accountancy school usually includes among its basic subjects accounting theory and practice, auditing, cost accounting, tax accounting, business law, statistics, and business English. It does not include any of the liberal arts subjects given in a 4-year college course, such as advanced English composition and literature, foreign languages, theoretical mathematics, and social sciences.

Some accountants who are preparing for the CPA examination attend accountancy schools for refresher training. Others have been able to enter beginning jobs in accountancy after a 2-year day course. And a number of employed bookkeepers, secretaries, or others who look toward an accounting career have attended the commercial schools at night to help themselves advance on the job.

The National Association and Council of Business Schools approves 1- and 2-year schools which meet its standards on course content, skills to be attained, size and quality of staff, and equipment used in each of five basic courses: stenography, secretarial and executive secretarial training, junior accounting, higher accounting, and business administration. Of the approximately 1,500 private business schools in the country today, about 600 have met the membership standards of the Association. Information about private business schools may be obtained by writing to the Association at 601 13th Street NW., Washington 5, D. C.

For 2-year schools of accountancy, information may be obtained from the American Association of Professional Schools of Accountancy, 1100 16th Street NW., Washington 6, D. C.

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<sup>3</sup> Called by a variety of designations, *e. g.*, business college, commercial or business school, university of accountancy.



### **Correspondence Courses**

Some private business schools offer correspondence courses in accounting. A number of universities also have accounting correspondence courses, which they usually call extension courses because they are offered under their extension divisions.

Correspondence course students receive lessons and assignments through the mail. They study the material at home and return their completed homework papers to the school by mail. The papers are marked and the final grade for the course is based on the marks.

Correspondence courses in accounting may be taken by individuals who are employed but who wish to increase their knowledge during their spare time and, as a result, earn more money. Some corporations recommend that their employees take such courses. College graduates may take courses to review or supplement their training, or to prepare for examinations.

Hundreds of high schools in the country have adopted the Benton Harbor plan,<sup>4</sup> under which correspondence courses supervised by qualified teachers are made available to the students. Under this plan, correspondence courses are also conducted in junior colleges, YMCA's, and evening schools.

However, correspondence courses are becoming less popular with high-school graduates who in the past took them to qualify for office work. High schools are offering more and improved commercial courses, so that graduates need no longer seek this type of training after completing high school.

Some employers will not hire people who have had only correspondence school training. The Federal Government, in making civil service appointments, will not recognize credits earned through correspondence courses.

Before registering for correspondence courses in accounting, it is advisable for the prospective student to know as much as possible about the school. The National Home Study Council investigates correspondence schools and approves them on the basis of satisfactory courses, competent instructors, reasonable tuition fees, and financial responsibility. Information concerning specific correspondence schools and their accounting courses may be obtained from the Council, whose address is 1420 New York Avenue NW., Washington 5, D. C.

The National University Extension Association approves college extension courses. Its members are mostly State universities, and it is located at Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind.

Students taking college extension courses are not necessarily required to have any academic prerequisites, and many are not inter-

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<sup>4</sup> See appendix 3, item 43.

ested in earning college credits. However, some of them may at a future date wish to take a college degree and, if possible, apply credits for the extension courses toward the degree. They will find that certain colleges allow a few credits for such courses, and others allow none. Students may inquire of the National University Extension Association about colleges that allow credit.

### ***Internship Programs***

Both men and women students are participating in what is called the cooperative program in accounting, which has been developed in some schools in recent years. Senior students who wish to do so may serve a period of internship with public accounting firms and other employers who cooperate with the schools in internship programs.

Student interns acquire valuable experience while still at school; they are placed in environments where they have contact with business people and acquire direct knowledge of practical accounting operations. This experience may either stimulate their interest in the profession or may cause them to realize, before they complete their schooling, that they are in the wrong field. While acting as interns, the students' time is divided between performing work assignments and receiving instruction in accounting from senior accountants or instructors from outside the firms.

Cooperating firms are pleased to have the help of interns, particularly during rush periods, and frequently offer permanent positions to students who have done particularly good work.

By 1953, 30 large educational institutions had been experimenting with internship programs. However, internship is not compulsory and most of the institutions have found it difficult to make arrangements for even a majority of their students to take part in the programs.

### ***Company Training Programs***

A number of firms have formalized training programs, usually conducted by their senior accountants, for newly hired, inexperienced accounting employees. The periods of training vary among the companies.

Training materials may include a good accounting text, a handbook, an audit practice set, pamphlets on taxation, and information releases of the American Institute of Accountants and of the Securities and Exchange Commission. New employees are given instructions in mathematics, auditing procedures, staff and office procedures, taxation, and the use of business machines. They are also required to analyze

and solve problems in accounting, under the supervision of the instructor. Examinations may be given during the training to determine the progress of the new employee.

Although company training programs are expensive, they have been found to reduce the time necessary for new workers to assume responsible assignments. Small firms cannot afford to adopt such programs, but they sometimes outline instructions and furnish study materials for their new employees.

At least one large accounting firm has a program designed to help new accountants pass the CPA examination. This firm hires college graduates and gives them practical training that will be useful in answering the questions on the examination.

Candidates for a firm's training program are often selected by the company's representatives who visit colleges annually to search for recruits. They look for graduates who are accounting majors or who have completed a course in business administration, with a "B" average or better. Candidates are required to take aptitude tests at the beginning of the training. For 1 year they are given formal training instruction and, in addition, are tried out in various positions in the accounting department. If they do satisfactory work, they are given a permanent appointment at the end of the year.

### ***Requirements for the Certified Public Accountant License***

To obtain a CPA license, a candidate must pass a difficult written examination and meet certain qualifications for education and experience. The examination provided by the American Institute of Accountants is uniform in all States. However, the other requirements differ among States.

In New York and New Jersey, the CPA candidate is required by law to be a college graduate with an accounting major. Several other States have such laws under consideration, and there is a general movement among many States to raise educational requirements to college graduation. However, candidates in most States could meet the educational requirements for a CPA with high-school graduation in 1955, provided they had some paid experience in accounting. Because detailed requirements for the CPA vary and also change from time to time, candidates must become familiar with the licensing regulations of the State in which they plan to work.

The uniform written examination is generally given in four sections, and candidates may retain credit for a period of time for the sections they pass. They may repeat any section in which they fail. It was reported that in 1 recent year about 90 percent failed on the first try, but that 60 percent of the candidates passed all four parts eventually.

The four sections of the uniform CPA examination are: auditing, commercial law, accounting theory, and accounting practice. In a number of States, candidates are examined for additional subjects such as economics, taxation, and government accounting.

Although the certification for public accounting was intended for public accountants, as a means of insuring high-quality services and unimpeachable ethics, many persons who do not plan to practice public accounting take the CPA examination and obtain a license. It is a mark of professional competency and as such, gives career prestige, especially to women, who often need a "plus" to get started in a field in which men predominate.

## V. THE JOB OUTLOOK

### ***It Looks Good for Women***

Opportunities for women are always best in nontraditional occupations when the demand for new workers is high. The need for accountants was very great during World War II and has continued high in the years following. Employers, economists, accountancy experts, and educators agree, in 1955, that job openings for all classes of accountants, and well-trained professional auditors, public accountants, and specialists, in particular, will keep somewhat ahead of the anticipated supply throughout the 1950's and beyond.

A number of businessmen have pointed out that they might let some of their clerks and bookkeepers go when business gets a little slack, but they need their professional accountants all the more, at such times, to help them keep "out of the red."

One source of information on job supply and demand is the Bureau of Employment Security of the United States Department of Labor. Each month it publishes lists of jobs for which there is not an adequate supply of workers. The lists are based on information provided by State employment agencies. For the calendar year 1954, the occupation of accountant, or accountant and auditor, appeared in the inventories of the Bureau of Employment Security every month, with the exception of June—which is a very slow month for accounting work. The same situation, according to the Bureau of Employment Security, prevailed during 1953.

The need for well-qualified accountants prompts many industrial concerns and public accounting firms to send representatives to colleges to interview and recruit students about to graduate with good scholastic records.

Annually for the last 9 years, surveys have been made by Dr. Frank S. Endicott, Director of Placement, Northwestern University, of the college recruitment practices of large and medium-sized firms. He collected data for his most recent—the ninth—survey in November

1954 from 152 firms, interested in recruits for a number of professions. Sixty of the surveyed companies reported they wanted to hire 1,028 college accounting graduates for 1955. In the preceding year, 60 surveyed companies had wanted to hire a slightly larger number—1,058 college graduates. However, these companies had been unable to hire all the graduates that they wanted during 1954, and possibly as a result may have made some staffing readjustments.

The significant change in accounting employment for 1955 was in the fact that industrial recruiters sent to colleges showed a far greater interest than ever before in hiring women accounting graduates, according to Dr. Endicott's survey. Four companies recruited eight women graduates in 1954. For 1955, four companies were looking for 203 women accounting graduates.

The president of a well-known school of accountancy in the District of Columbia was able to speak specifically on the local demand for women graduates. For some years, the school had been receiving four or five times as many job offers for women as it had available women graduates. In April 1955, these offers amounted to as much as six to eight times the number available.

### **The Paycheck**

According to Dr. Endicott's ninth survey 80 companies recruiting personnel reported the average monthly starting salary for accountants graduating in 1955 as \$332, a slight increase over the \$325 paid in 1954. Students with advanced degrees in accounting or business administration received higher starting salaries, but they were not included in the survey.

The salary summary was tabulated as follows:

**Table 4.—Starting monthly salaries for college accounting graduates reported by 80 companies**

Number companies reporting	\$251 to \$275	\$276 to \$300	\$301 to \$325	\$326 to \$350	\$351 to \$375	\$376 to \$400	Average starting salary
80-----	2	12	24	26	14	2	\$332

Information was also secured in the same survey on the salaries of accountants after 5 years of experience. Forty-two companies that had hired 1949 college accounting graduates at an average monthly salary of \$244, reported that these employees were earning, at the date of the survey (November 1954), an average of \$484 monthly—almost double the amount of their starting salaries.

Several sources have indicated that a professionally trained accountant just beginning in 1955 could expect to earn \$6,000 (or \$500 a month) 5 years later.

Private accounting firms usually pay the beginner a little more than public accounting. The public accountant has to learn a greater variety of skills and needs more time before he is fully productive than the accountant who works for one company. Eventually, the public accountant's salary is likely to exceed that of the accountant working for a single company. If an accountant becomes a partner in a firm, or starts his own firm, he may eventually earn an annual income ranging from \$10,000 to \$25,000.

In the Federal Government, starting salaries for accountants and auditors range from \$3,410 to \$10,800 a year (GS-5 through GS-15), depending on the requirements of the job and the grade for which an applicant is qualified by education and experience.

### ***Where Are the Job Opportunities?***

The great majority of certified public accountants work in metropolitan areas or in manufacturing centers in the most densely populated States. New York State alone employed 28 percent of all CPA's in 1950. Pennsylvania, Illinois, and California accounted for 22 percent more, and a large number of the remaining half were distributed among the following States: Texas, New Jersey, Ohio, Michigan, Massachusetts, Missouri, Wisconsin, and Maryland.

All States, however, provide opportunities for public and private accountants wherever business is located, although industrial and financial centers have the largest number of job openings. For women who wish to work and live in small communities there are accounting and auditing jobs in universities, public schools, government agencies, hospitals, and other institutions, as well as in retail stores.

Today's business and tax regulations require even the small storekeeper to employ the services of an accountant from time to time, and a substantial income can be earned by any woman accountant who wants to go into business for herself by starting with a group of small clients in a community where accounting services are not easy to obtain.

New opportunities for women accountants exist today in many southern States which have expanded industrially since World War II and which are continuing steadily to increase their production and volume of business in many different fields of activity.

### ***Advancement on the Job***

Public and private accounting differ in the kinds of opportunities they present for advancement on the job. Differences also exist according to the size of the company and the character of the business.

In public accounting, the job levels have been fairly well established as "junior," "semi-senior," and "senior." The beginner is a junior accountant and does relatively routine work while learning, both

through the regular duties and through the company's training program. If the company does not have a formal training program, the junior is usually expected to continue training through home study. After 2 or 3 years, a junior may advance to a semi-senior job where the responsibility is much greater and there is more leeway for making decisions. In several more years, the senior level may be achieved. The senior accountant is usually regarded as a top-level member of the firm and participates in financial policy and in helping management to make decisions.

In private accounting work, the lines of advancement are not so well established. In a company with a large accounting division or several accounting sections, the college graduate accountant may start out in a bookkeeping job, or even as an accounting clerk. Usually, however, this is for orientation purposes and, if qualified, the accountant should be able to move along quickly. Sometimes a year is spent by the beginning accountant in routine jobs in many different branches or sections of a company to learn the business. As a result, also, the firm can decide upon the best place for the employee and the next step upward. The advance may be into specialized work, like budget, cost or tax accounting, or into staff work at the management level or in the office of the general controller (whose job is usually the top accounting post in a company). From an assistant on the controller's staff the accountant may move into a controller's job or into an executive position requiring both accounting and administrative training.

In a small firm the novice accountant may be assigned as bookkeeper or head bookkeeper and in that position obtain a great variety of experience. An opportunity is also offered, in a small business, to work closely with the owner or general manager. For this kind of job, considerable responsibility and detail are often involved. The beginner's salary in a small firm is frequently larger than in a large company. Promotion from head bookkeeper may be to controller or general manager, in time; or it may be an increase in salary and assisting staff as the volume of business expands.

### **Part-Time Work**

Fortunately for women accountants with homemaking responsibilities, many business establishments rely upon part-time auditors for periodic check-up and financial reports. A great deal of tax accounting is also seasonal or part time. If a woman's career is interrupted temporarily, she may keep in touch with the profession and add to her income through part-time employment on an hourly, daily, or seasonal basis.

### ***Maturity Can Be an Advantage***

Another factor which is to women's advantage in accounting is maturity. Employers who are usually looking for judgment and experience in their accountants are not apt to eliminate the woman applicant who is over 40.

### ***Some Observations for Women Looking Toward a Career***

It is often helpful for students to talk with people who are successfully employed to find out what their job duties are, how they like their work, and what kinds of advice they would give to young people about training and other career matters. The Women's Bureau staff in 1955 interviewed a number of women accountants on the job with this in view. The talks were informal, but all followed the same broad outline: the job itself and how it was obtained; education and training; what it is like to work as a woman in this field; and what suggestions might be given to young women who are considering accountancy as a career.

Business activities represented by the women accountants who were interviewed are: communications; public accounting; banking; merchandising; and real estate. All of the women were employed in large metropolitan areas. A few were in business for themselves, and one was in a partnership with her husband. The majority were between 35 and 45. Half of the remainder were over 45 and half younger than 35.

The women accountants interviewed by Women's Bureau staff were selected at random. They may not constitute a representative group. Nevertheless, the similarities of their observations on many questions were remarkable; and their professional career histories were parallel. All had entered the profession through a period of try-out in business which stimulated them to take professional training on a part-time basis, while employed. They had begun work as secretaries, bookkeepers, or accounting clerks, and earned their professional status in what they considered "the hard way." Their particular concern for the next decade of women accountants was (1) that they make their career choice as early as possible, while still in high school; and, as a consequence, (2) that they plan the preparatory period on a sound and practical basis.

With few exceptions, the women accountants stressed the advantages of a 4-year college education and recommended the basic liberal arts course with a major in accounting, although most of them had not followed this plan. A few were in favor of as much technical training in accounting as it would be possible to obtain in preparatory education, especially if the trainee was planning to take a CPA exam-



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ination. All volunteered the advice that proficiency in English grammar and composition were indispensable tools for the professional accountant in the preparation of reports and verbal communications on the job—as well as for the CPA examination which requires a substantial number of answers in expository or essay form.

More than half of the women questioned thought that women might find it an advantage to become certified public accountants, whether they entered public or private work. This observation related to the almost unanimous opinion of those interviewed that women, to achieve professional recognition in competition with men, must demonstrate achievement or ability above the average for accountants.

## Appendix 1

### *Occupational Definitions*

Selected Occupational Definitions in the Accounting and Bookkeeping Field (Excerpted from the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, Part I, published by the U. S. Department of Labor, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1949).

Note: Job titles printed in bold face type are sometimes used as alternates to the major title. The number which appears after each title is the code number used by the *Dictionary* system in Part II.

#### *Positions Classified as Professional*

**ACCOUNTANT, GENERAL** (profess. & kin.) 0-01.20. **accountant, office.** Devises, installs, and supervises operation of general-accounting, budget, and cost systems: Supervises subordinates engaged in maintenance of accounts and records. Balances books periodically, and prepares statements for administrative officers, showing items, such as receipts, disbursements, expenses, and profit and loss. Prepares Federal, State, or local tax returns. Interprets accounts and records for administrative officers. May be designated according to type of accounting performed, as accountant, revenue; accountant, royalties.

**ACCOUNTANT, BUDGET** (profess. & kin.) 0-01.50. **budget engineer.** Reviews expenditures of requisitioning departments of a firm or other institution to insure that expenses remain within budget limits: Maintains records of expenses, inventories, and budget balances. Audits vouchers and expense accounts. Interprets accounts and records for management when budgets are drafted for new fiscal period. May devise and install budget control systems. May work independently or supervise others in performing routine phases of operations.

**ACCOUNTANT, COST** (profess. & kin.) 0-01.10. **cost analyzer.** Devises, installs, or controls systems for determining unit costs of products or services: Analyzes cost records, such as raw-material purchases, payrolls, and machinery-depreciation data, to ascertain distribution of costs for various divisions of management and production. Classifies labor, material, and overhead costs to compute unit cost of product or service. Records cost data for use of management in controlling expenditures. May work independently or supervise others in performing routine phases of operations. May be designated according to type of establishment in which work is performed, as cost accountant, government; cost accountant, plant; cost accountant, storehouse.

**ACCOUNTANT, PUBLIC** (profess. & kin.) 0-01.30. Performs a variety of accountancy services either on a fee basis or as a member of an accountancy firm: Audits bookkeeping accounts and records. Prepares and certifies financial statements for presentation to executives, boards of directors, stockholders, or regulatory public bodies. Devises and installs accounting, filing, and bookkeeping systems. Conducts financial investigations in matters such as suspected fraud, royalty-payment disputes, insolvency, bankruptcy, and breach of contract. Prepares or reviews tax returns, or contests claims before tax officials. Assists in formulating budget policies and procedures. May act as a liquidating trustee

in dissolution proceedings, or as an advocate, arbitrator, or umpire in controversies involving accountants and clients. May furnish testimony in court and arbitration cases. May work independently, or supervise others in performing routine phases of operations. Usually has satisfied State accountancy requirements.

**ACCOUNTANT, TAX** (profess. & kin.) 0-01.40. Prepares Federal, State, or local tax returns of an individual, business, or corporation: Examines accounts and records and computes returns according to prescribed rates, laws, and regulations. May conduct research to determine effects of taxes on business operations, recommending alternative methods of operation to reduce tax liabilities. May compute accrued taxes for preparation of financial statements. May devise and install tax record systems. May specialize in a particular phase of tax accounting, such as individual income, property, corporation, unemployment compensation, or social security. May work independently, or supervise others in performing routine phases of operations.

**ACCOUNTING SYSTEM EXPERT** (profess. & kin.) 0-01.70. Devises and installs general-accounting and cost systems in organizations that cannot readily use a standardized system: Conducts survey of operations to ascertain needs and peculiarities of establishment. Sets up suitable classification of accounts and office procedures, devising new forms to meet special problems. Secures efficient distribution of mechanical aids, such as calculators, adding machines, tabulators, and bookkeeping machines. Prepares accounting manuals to facilitate operation of system. May work independently, or supervise others in performing routine phases of operations.

**AUDITOR** (profess. & kin.) 0-01-60. Examines and vouches for the accuracy and completeness of bookkeeping records of an establishment: Inspects items in books of original entry, such as the daybook or journal, to insure proper recording of transactions. Reviews postings to verify transfer of journal entries to the ledger. Counts cash on hand, and checks amount with bank balance. Inspects and verifies notes receivable and payable, and negotiable securities. Examines canceled checks to authenticate amounts, signatures, cancellations, and dates of entry into cash book. Verifies journal and ledger entries for cash payments, purchases, expenses, and trial balances. Examines and authenticates inventory items. Checks arithmetic totals for accuracy. May prepare financial statements for client, such as profit-and-loss statements and balance sheets. May prepare detailed reports, showing items such as operating costs, total assets, liabilities, volume of sales, net profits, and depreciation costs. May work independently or supervise others in performing routine phases of audit.

*Positions Classified as Clerical*

**BOOKKEEPER** (clerical) II. 1-01.02. **general bookkeeper.** Keeps complete and systematic set of records of business transactions of establishment, examining and recording transactions in record books and on forms: Balances books and compiles reports at regular intervals to show receipts, expenditures, accounts payable, accounts receivable, profit or loss, and many other items pertinent to the operation of a business. Calculates wages of employees from plant records or time cards, and makes up checks or draws cash from bank for payment of wages. May prepare, type, and mail monthly statements to customers. May perform other duties, such as taking telephone orders and making bank deposits. May operate adding machine or calculating machine. May take and transcribe dictation.

**BOOKKEEPER** (clerical) III. 1-01.03. Keeps record of and works with only one phase or section of a complete set of records pertaining to business transactions, such as the accounts-receivable or the accounts-payable section, performing duties as in Bookkeeper II. May be designated according to section of records kept, as Accounts-Payable Bookkeeper; Accounts-Receivable Bookkeeper; Christmas-Club Bookkeeper; Circulation Bookkeeper; Classified-Advertising Bookkeeper; Discount Bookkeeper; Display-Advertising Bookkeeper; Interest-Accrual Bookkeeper; Investment-Bonds Bookkeeper; Safe-Deposit-Box Bookkeeper; Savings Bookkeeper; Trust Bookkeeper.

**ACCOUNTING CLERK** (clerical) 1-01.31. Performs routine calculating, typing, and posting duties in accounting: Checks items on reports, summarizing and posting data to designated books. Performs a variety of other clerical duties, such as making up invoices or monthly statements, preparing payrolls, verifying bank accounts, keeping record files, making up periodic report of business activities, and listing and checking details as instructed. May operate calculating machine or adding machine.

**AUDIT CLERK** (clerical) 1-01.32. **auditing clerk.** Checks and verifies figures, calculations, and postings pertaining to various transactions that have been recorded and submitted by other clerical workers: Corrects small errors and lists all others that are to be adjusted. May make up totals or balances for individual items or amounts shown on reports. Usually confined to examining one class of records and designated according to type of records checked, as Cash-Sales-Auditing Clerk; Charge-Accounts-Audit Clerk; C.O.D. Audit Clerk. May operate an adding machine or a calculating machine.

**POSTING CLERK** (clerical) 1-01.43. **entry clerk; poster; transcribing clerk.** Records details of business transactions in ledgers or on special forms as instructed, transferring the entries from one accounting record to another as necessary. May make simple calculations in totaling the accounts or computing extensions. May operate an adding machine and a calculating machine.

**BOOKKEEPING-MACHINE OPERATOR** (clerical) I. 1-02.01. **account clerk; accounting-machine operator; bookkeeper; bookkeeper, machine; poster; poster, machine; posting-machine operator; recording clerk.** Keeps set of records of business transactions, using bookkeeping machine: Places selected bookkeeping form on flat writing surface of machine and sets carriage. Depresses keys to type on sheet desired data, such as name, address, items purchased or sold, and services rendered, and to calculate totals, net amounts, and other items, recording final computations on the form. Performs related clerical duties. May make up bills, invoices, and statements on billing machine.

**POSTING-MACHINE OPERATOR** (clerical) II. 1-02.04. **poster; poster, machine.** Records numerical details of transactions in record books and on special forms, using a machine similar to a bookkeeping machine except that it is equipped only with numerical keys, no descriptive material being written in the records: Places record form in writing position on machine, and presses keys to type numerical records and to perform necessary calculations, the final computations usually being recorded directly on the record form.

## Appendix 2

### *Sources of Additional Information*

#### Professional societies (selected) :<sup>1</sup>

- American Institute of Accountants  
270 Madison Ave.  
New York 16, N. Y.
- American Society of Women Accountants  
327 South LaSalle St.  
Chicago 4, Ill.
- American Woman's Society of Certified Public Accountants  
327 South LaSalle St.  
Chicago 4, Ill.
- Controllers Institute of America  
1 E. 42d St.  
New York 17, N. Y.
- The Institute of Internal Auditors  
120 Wall St.  
New York 5, N. Y.
- National Association of Cost Accountants  
505 Park Ave.  
New York 22, N. Y.
- National Society of Public Accountants  
1012 Fourteenth St., NW.  
Washington, D. C.

#### School associations :

- American Association of Professional Schools of Accountancy  
1100 Sixteenth St., NW.  
Washington, D. C.
- American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business  
101 North Skinker Road  
Station Number 24  
St. Louis 5, Mo.
- National Association and Council of Business Schools  
601 Thirteenth St., NW.  
Washington 5, D. C.
- National Home Study Council  
1420 New York Ave., NW.  
Washington 5, D. C.
- National University Extension Association  
Bloomington, Ind.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the societies listed, there are a number of others that specialize in narrower accounting fields or that operate on a local area level.

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Published information on scholarships :

Refer to bulletin issued by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, *Scholarships and Fellowships Available at Institutions of Higher Education*. Bulletin 1951, No. 16. 1951.

Sometimes civic and community groups and women's organizations provide scholarship assistance to young women who are interested in professional career training. Consult with your high-school counselor for possible additional sources of information in your community.

Information on Federal civil-service positions :

The U. S. Civil Service Commission publishes announcements of examinations for accounting positions in various Federal agencies. In general, specific background experience and training requirements vary among the Federal agencies, depending upon the functions of the agencies. Nonetheless, the young person who applies for the lower grade positions is expected to have had 3 years of general accounting experience. As a substitute for this general experience, the candidate may offer a CPA certificate, or for each 9 months of experience, either 1 year of accounting education above the high-school level or 1 year of teaching accounting subjects above the high-school level. To qualify for higher grade positions, candidates must have additional experience in specified types of accounting work.

Announcements of accounting examinations may be secured by writing or applying to the U. S. Civil Service Commission, Washington, D. C., to civil-service regional offices, local post offices, and local State employment offices.

## Appendix 3

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